

Virginia Community Reentry Approach

Fact Sheet

Communities across Virginia are implementing a collaborative reentry approach unique in its integration of human services and public safety. It is being voluntarily implemented statewide by Virginia localities.

The goals of this approach are to increase public safety through reduced recidivism, to maximize opportunities for former offenders returning to the community and to support family and community reintegration for persons previously incarcerated. It is not a new program nor does it impose any requirements on institutions or local government agencies and their community partners. It is rather a collaborative reentry approach for adults and juveniles that maximizes effective use of existing resources.

Communities voluntarily adopt this reentry approach. In participating localities, agencies and organizations form local community collaboration councils. Councils bring together human services, public safety and other public agencies along with private agencies, non-profits, law enforcement, the courts, businesses, community-based service providers and faith-based organizations. Council membership is voluntary.

Community collaboration councils address reentry and other community issues such as housing, employment, behavioral health, substance abuse, family services, positive youth development, benefits and food assistance. They identify community assets and service gaps and they focus on reentry by addressing reentry barriers and coordinating reentry related services and resources.

The reentry collaboration approach is developed around four primary principles: pre-release planning, interagency coordination, integrated service delivery and support of family and community reintegration, including development of positive links to the community.

Local service coordination is accomplished through referral, use of case staffing, establishment of a service coordination team or a combination of these and other coordination methods adopted by a local community collaboration council. Each council establishes their method for service coordination based on their resources and priorities.

As part of the principle of a “system of family and community support,” local councils promote and facilitate pro-social activities such as family re-integration services and peer support groups. Councils also identify and/or develop mentoring or sponsorship programs. Volunteer mentors, coaches or sponsors “walk with” the previously incarcerated person functioning as a friend and offering support and encouragement to them and their family.

Local community collaboration councils place emphasis on adoption of evidence-based programming by community service providers, on access to employment and workforce development services, on reentry mentors to support responsible decision making, on development of positive work habits, on formation of healthy relationships and on use of positive parenting practices.

This collaborative reentry approach allows communities across Virginia to address locality specific reentry issues, assets and barriers using a common vision based on shared principles and a collaborative community-based reentry approach.

To learn more about the Virginia Community Reentry Approach, visit
http://www.dss.virginia.gov/community/prisoner_reentry/index.cgi